

Department of Pharmacy and Chemistry

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Help the propaganda for reform by prescribing official preparations. The committees of the U. S. P. and N. F. are chosen from the very best therapeutics, pharmacologists, pharmacognosists and pharmacists. The formulae are carefully worked out and the products tested in scientifically equipped laboratories under the very best conditions. Is it not plausible to assume that these preparations are, at least, as good as those evolved with far inferior facilities by the mercenary nostrum maker who claims all the law will allow?

During the present campaign against narcotics the statement is constantly made officially and unofficially that the physician is to blame for a very large proportion of addicts. One hundred fiends are haled before the Chief of Police and in response to questions, seventy-five perhaps tell a hard-luck story to the effect that the habit was contracted during a long illness and that the prescriptions which the physician ordered had large quantities of narcotics to relieve pain. This is the simplest story to tell and it is more likely to awaken sympathy than a statement that the habit was contracted deliberately or through association with others. No attempt is made to investigate the story and it is accepted at its face value and made the basis for articles in medical and secular press.

This is a matter which concerns every physician, for not alone does it involve the fair name of the profession but it may lead to drastic legislation which will certainly interfere with the legitimate use of narcotics. Already men who cannot be called cranks are advocating that the Government should entirely stop the manufacture and use of opium and coca derivatives. The Federal Committee on Narcotic Traffic recommended legislation to prevent the manufacture and use of heroin.

A number of years ago it was very easy for the physician to make an addict, especially if his prescription fell into the hands of an unscrupulous druggist who could legally repeat it indefinitely. A few physicians were inclined to be careless and in some cases nurses made life easier by giving hypodermics when they were not absolutely necessary and in that way created addicts.

For many years, however, most physicians have recognized this danger and many druggists have refused to refill prescriptions even when they could do so legally. The Harrison Anti-Narcotic Act, which is being rigidly enforced, exercises complete supervision over the legitimate use of narcotics and it is hard to believe that any more addicts will be made by the physician. It therefore behooves the physician to see that there be no more drastic legislation so far as he is concerned.

The Federal Committee found that fully one-half of all the opium and coca preparations used in this country were brought in illegally and there seems to be no diminution in this traffic. It is said that addicts can openly obtain as much morphine, heroin and cocaine as they can buy, and it therefore looks as though what is needed is not legislation regarding the use of these, but legislation or action that will get the illegal drug peddlers. If judges would give the men who deliberately violate the law for the purpose of supplying the needs of addicts the full limit, they could be lenient with the druggist or physician who unintentionally overlooks some technicality and still stop the traffic. However, what is the use of cutting off opium and alcohol when anybody can buy paregoric, for unfortunately the law prohibiting the sale of this poison has been held up by referendum petition.

Hereafter the skull and bones symbol and the word "Poison" must be printed in red ink on all labels affixed to wholesale and retail packages of completely denatured alcohol, according to instruc-

tions received to-day by Collector of Internal Revenue Justus S. Wardell from the Department. This action, the report states, has been taken in view of the grave and extended abuses of the use of completely denatured alcohol.

In his instructions the Commissioner says:

"Reports recently received in the Bureau establish that completely denatured alcohol is being used extensively for bathing and rubbing purposes. This is contrary to the law and regulations and such uses cannot be tolerated, as the completely denatured alcohol is highly injurious to the skin and animal tissue.

"It is also established that completely denatured alcohol is being sold by irresponsible dealers under such circumstances as to assure them that it is being used for beverage purposes. Where it is so used for any length of time blindness inevitably ensues and the continued use can only result in death."

Completely denatured alcohol is a mixture of ethylalcohol, and methyl (wood) alcohol, to which pyridine or some other malodorous substance is added, and pays no internal revenue tax.

The Council of Pharmacy and Chemistry of the American Medical Association comments on the Merrill Proteogens as follows: "They present another attempt to foist on the medical profession a series of essentially secret preparations whose therapeutic value has not been scientifically demonstrated. It is the old story of exploiting physicians through commercial pseudoscience; of trading on the credulity of the profession to the detriment of the public. They are not admissible because their composition is secret; because the therapeutic claims made for them are unwarranted; and because the secrecy and complexity of their composition makes the use of these preparations irrational. The Proteogens are said to be prepared 'Under the personal supervision of the originator, Dr. A. S. Horowitz,' who also originated Autolysin (an alleged cancer remedy, exploited some years ago). At one time the advertising for Proteogen No. 1 (Plantex) gave the impression that this was essentially the same as Autolysin. A study of the medical literature revealed no evidence establishing the value of the Proteogens; in fact, no evidence was found other than that appearing in the advertising matter of the manufacturer. The range of diseases in which Proteogens are recommended is so wide as to make obvious the lack of scientific judgment which characterizes their exploitation. Considering the grave nature of the diseases for which Proteogens are recommended, the want of a rational basis for the method of treatment and the general tenor of the advertising, it appears safe to conclude that these agents do not represent any definite advance in therapeutics" (Jour. A. M. A., July 12, 1919, page 128).

The Council has refused to accept Hormotone because its composition is semi-secret and its therapeutic claims seem unwarranted.

"Pasteur" Made the Hero of a Play*

It will certainly interest the world at large—and particularly, the medical world, to know that the great Pasteur has just been given one more honor. He has been made the hero of a beautiful play.

Pasteur—as early as twenty-four years after his death, "est entré dans la Légende" as the French would say,—(has entered the realm of legends). It must be that his glory is so high, the halo around his name so radiant, that it affords the necessary perspective usually required, and only obtained after many generations.

*The above was written specially for the Journal by Miss Rebecca Godchaux, at the request of Dr. René Bine.